(c) This agreement does not provide acceptance of an obligation by any party to permit the movement of goods and passenger traffic across its territory.

(d) No specific time-frame for completion of works has been stipulated in the agreement.

Economic package for Assam

*161. SHRI DWIJENDRA NATH SHARMAH: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Assam is still the poorest and the most backward State in the country;

(b) if so, the percentage of people living below the poverty line, as well as the literacy and drop-out rates;

(c) the action taken up to assist the State to come up to the national level norms and the details of economic package for the poor people proposed to be formulated; and

(d) if no action has been taken so far, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING (SHRI M.V. RAJASEKHARAN): (a) The ranking of States by the per capita State Domestic Product (SDP) indicates that Assam is one of the poorest States in the country. Among the major States, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh had lower per capita SDP in 2001-02, the last year for which data is available. The National Human Development Report, 2001 indicates that amongst major States, Bihar has a lower Human Development Index (HDI) than Assam in 2001.

(b) 36.09 per cent of people in the State are living below the poverty line (1999-2000 estimates). As per census data 2001, percentage of literate persons in the State is 64.28. Percentage of drop-out rates from Class-I to IV, Class-I to VIII and Class-I to X is 48.64,69.29 and 75.61 respectively.

(c) and (d) Action taken to assist the State to come to the National level norms is as follows:

(i) Government of India has categorized Assam as a Special Category State, entitling the State to receive funds for their

Five Year Plans and Annual Plans as 90% grant and 10% loan from the Central Government. The State Government also gets Central Assistance under Central Plan Schemes, Centrally Sponsored Schemes and Special Plan Schemes.

(ii) Special Central Assistance is provided under Hill Area Development Programme (HADP) and Border Area Development Programme (BADP) to the State.

(iii) Under the Backward Districts Initiatives of the Rashtriya Sam Vikas Yojana (RSVY), five districts of Assam, namely, Kokrajhar, North Lakhimpur, Karbi Anglong, Dhemaji and North Cachar Hills have been covered.

(iv) State is also benefited by project based funding for the projects of importance in the NER in respect of inter-State transport and communication, power, health, flood control, etc., from the North Eastern Council (NEC).

(v) State is beneficiary of the package for socio-economic development of North Eastern States and Sikkim announced by Prime Minister at Shillong on 22nd January, 2000. Further, all Ministries and Departments of the Government of India have been mandated to allocate at least 10% of their plan budget for schemes and programmes in the NER (except 18 Departments who have been specifically exempted by the Government). The amount remaining unspent from this 10% allocation is transferred to a Non-Lapsable Central Pool of Resources (NLCPR) for development in the NER. State is getting project-based assistance from NLCPR presently being administered by the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region.

(vi) The Government is committed to the speedy development of the North Eastern States including Assam. Accordingly, in the current year 2004-05, Rs. 650 crore have been provided from the Central Pool of Resources for specific projects and schemes in the NER including for Assam, up from Rs. 550 crores in 2003-04, besides Central Assistance for State plan.